

DEFENCE

OF

MR. GARRICK,

641. f.
22.

In Answer to the

LETTER-WRITER.

With Remarks upon PLAYS and PLAYERS,
and the present State of the Stage.

By a DRAMATIC AUTHOR.

Laudatur ab his, culpatur ab illis.

H O R.



L O N D O N :

Printed for R. STEVENS, at *Pope's-Head*, in
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OF
MR. GARRICK

In answer to the

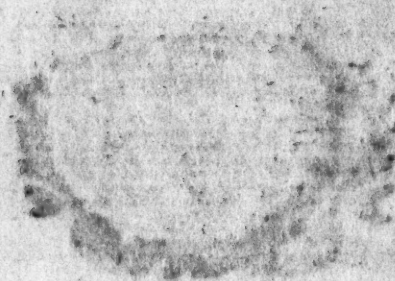
LETTER-WORTH



With Remarks upon the
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By a Dramatic Author.

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Printed for R. Stevens, at the Theatre, in
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A
D E F E N C E
O F
Mr. G A R R I C K.

In Answer to

The L E T T E R - W R I T E R.

S I R,



S I profess myself a Dramatic Author, you will naturally conclude, that I am one of that lucky Number who have tasted the Sweets of an Author's Night; at least you will imagine, that I have a Play to come on this Season, and, therefore, my Design in this Defence is to bribe the Manager to drag it on through Nine Nights, even

B

though

though it should happen not to take with the Town so much as the Author wishes and expects. But, Sir, I assure you, that so far from having had any Piece accepted, I have not even risked a Refusal by offering one: Nay, I have not as yet written a Line; but I have proceeded so far in the Drama, as to have made a Choice of my Subject; and, therefore, I presume to call myself a Dramatic Author, as the Student in Physic stiles himself Doctor, even before he has taken the Degrees.

I must own, that I am very little Qualified to undertake the Defence of a Manager, as I have had but slender Opportunities of cultivating the profound Science of Theatrical Criticism.

Since my failing in Trade (I was once a Linen-draper, but attended more to the Truncheon than the Yard) I have not been able to visit the *Bedford* Coffee-House, for Reasons too obvious to be mentioned, but on *Sundays*: The same Reasons have prevented

vented my going to the Theatres so often as I could wish, though I could easily, have got an Order through the Interest of an Under-Player at one House, and a Pantomime Figure-Dancer at the other. Yet the Hopes of extricating myself from these Difficulties by the Success of my Play have encouraged me to enquire into the Justice of the Charge which you have brought against the Manager: In doing which, you must not expect any Drollery or Comic Satire, as the whole bent of my Soul is toward Tragedy, and that too of the most dismal Kind.

I shall pass over your trite Remark "that Genius is the same in all Ages," by only observing that it is not always equally exerted; and though we must agree with you, that *Shakespeares*, *Congreves*, or *Rowes* might possibly start up in the present Times, yet it must be allowed, that there are many concurrent Causes to make us despair of it. Writing in general is diffused into so many Channels, that it is hardly

worth while for a Gentleman or a Scribler to cultivate the very difficult Province of the Drama, when an easier and surer Road to Fame and to Profit may be struck out elsewhere. But, you say, "this Dearth of Dramatic Genius is owing to the Conduct of the Managers, and to the Difficulty of getting a Play upon the Stage." The same Conduct, I believe, has prevailed at all Times, and the same Difficulty of getting an indifferent Performance acted on the Stage has always obtained. With respect to the present Manager of *Drury-Lane* Theatre, I may venture to say, that a good Play was never refused, though it must be confessed that some very middling ones have been accepted by him. As a Proof of this I defy any Body to produce one tolerable Piece, which has been printed in consequence of such Refusal.

You complain, "that an inferior Member of the Republic of Letters is possessed of a Right of regulating the Public Diversions according to his Will and
"Plea-

“ Pleasure, and of deciding the Fate of
 “ the most important Branch of Litera-
 “ ture.” In the First Place, you seem to
 forget, that there is such a Person as a
 Lord Chamberlain; and that the Public
 themselves have always exerted their Right
 of approving or disapproving any Exhibiti-
 ons brought before them. And as to the
 Matter of deciding on the Merit of Dra-
 matic Works, before they are acted, I have
 answered that before, by alledging that no
 really good Pieces have been ever rejected.

As I am a Stranger to the Customs as
 well as the Language of *France*, I can
 say nothing to your Account of the Con-
 duct of it's Theatre, or the Merit of it's
 Plays. You tell us, “ that the Gentlemen of
 the Bed-Chamber have the Chief Direction
 in these Points, and that they receive with
 readiness such Pieces as are offered.” This
 I cannot believe, as I am sure, if the Gen-
 tlemen or the Lords of the Bed-Chamber
 to his British Majesty, (who it may be pre-
 sumed are as competent Judges in these
 Matters)

Matters,) have the same Authority, they would hardly think of accepting all the Trash, that would infallibly be offered them. Suppose, for Example, Mr. *Garrick* should follow the Advice you give him, and resolve to act every Thing in the Shape of a Play, that was brought to him. What shoals of Tragedies, Tragi-Comedies, Comedies, Farces or Comedies of two or three Acts, Operas, Ballad-Operas, &c. &c. &c. would be poured in upon him at once? What then is the poor Manager to do? Is he to act them all in their turns? If so, in what Order are they to be brought out? First come first served, like the Customers in a Barber's Shop? or are the Authors to draw Lots, whose Piece shall be first represented? In such a Case, it would be necessary to act them every Hour in the Day, like the Drolls in *Bartholomew Fair*; if, indeed, there could be found any Audience so patient as to sit them out.

But let us consider the Difference of the *French* and *English* Theatres, with regard
to

to the Right invested in the respective Proprietors. I have heard, that the Company of Comedians in *France* are more immediately in their Monarch's Service, and have a stated annual Pension or Salary allotted them; in Consequence whereof, they are under the exprefs Direction of the Court, and are transported from Place to Place at the Will and Pleasure of their Masters. On the Contrary, though *our Theatres are called Royal, and the Drury-Lane Company is stiled His Majesty's Company*, yet are they the Property of private Persons only, and may be considered as their Freehold Estates, which Nobody can take from them. In this Light it would appear to be as much Injustice for any other Person to interfere therein, as it would be to oblige the Owners of *York or Tavistock Streets*, to turn their Houses into Taverns or Coffee-Houses, instead of letting them to Mercers and Haberdashers. That our Theatres are private Property, is plain from the Negotiation for the Sale of *Covent-Garden*, on which

which we were told, so considerable a Price is put, as would equal the Fortunes of many Members of Parliament. The Owners, therefore, have the common Right of Free *Englishmen*, to keep the Management of their own Estates in their own Hands; notwithstanding that arbitrary Body, called the Town, presumes to claim an Authority over them, which his Majesty himself would not exert. I know it will be said, that as the People pay for and support these Diversions, they have as natural a Right to judge of them, as the Customers have of the Liquor in a Public House. But then it should be considered, that it is in my Option to open my House either as a Tavern or a Coffee-House; and Nobody need frequent it, that does not like the Commodity: Nor can it be denied, but that a wise Vintner would always endeavour to have such Accommodations as he thinks are most suitable to the Taste of his Friends and Customers.

But

But to return,—I shall at present take but little notice of your scurrilous Treatment of Mr. *Murphy*, as I shall have an Opportunity, by and bye, of considering that Gentleman's Talents as a Writer. You call it Presumption in him "to measure Swords with the greatest Genius in *Europe*," meaning *Voltaire*: But I cannot help wishing, that the meanest Wits among us would, in every Branch of Literature, endeavour to cope with the most celebrated Academicians in *France* and *Italy*. Why is the Name of *Voltaire* so sacred, that it should be deemed a Profanation in an *English* Author to touch upon a Subject which he had before handled, and *Metastasio* before him; especially as that very *Voltaire* has built a Comedy on the Foundation of our *Plain Dealer*, which very Comedy was also raised on the *Misanthrope* of *Moliere*? For this Piece of Knowledge I must own myself indebted to a Teacher of Languages, who stands by me while I write, and will give me such further Information as I may want in the Course of this Letter.

C

You,

You, however, are pleased to commend Mr. *Garrick* for receiving the *Orphan of China*, not because it had too much Merit to be rejected, or because no Piece whatever ought to be rejected, but because "it's Reception (you mean, I suppose, from the Audience) may perhaps encourage a superior Genius to dedicate his Talents to the Stage." Very true: But whether the Piece is good or bad, or whether the Reception it meets with is warm or indifferent, I believe a superior Genius would be neither encouraged nor disheartened by it, from prosecuting his Talents in the Manner most agreeable to himself. You say, likewise, that Mr. *Garrick* "abated of his Severity in receiving the *Rout*," which I believe that Gentleman will agree with you, from his dropping the Representation of it, though it was first Acted for the Benefit of a Charity, is "a pitiful Farce", but not contented with that, you must still Spit your Venom against the Author of the *Orphan of China*, by adding, that it is

“ as destitute of Humour, Character, or
 “ Incident, as”—what? “ either the *Appren-
 tice* or the *Upbolsterer*.” I will not dis-
 pute with you, whether these two Pieces
 deserve all that bitterness of Censure you
 so plumbly bestow on them: They have
 been repeatedly acted, and will, I doubt
 not, be again repeated, to numerous Audi-
 ences: And this must be allowed to be
 some Criterion of it's Merit, as People,
 though they are obliged to pay for a
 Farce, are not obliged to sit it out; and you
 will do that Justice to the Managers
 Knowledge of his own Interest, as to sup-
 pose he would not put up a Farce, which
 Nobody would stay to see.

I can say nothing to the Tragedies of
Chateaubrun, as I know nothing of them,
 and my Friend the *French* Teacher has not
 yet read them. But I cannot help smiling
 at the Information you give us, “ that it is
 “ usual in *France* for an Audience, that
 “ assists at a New Tragedy, whose Merit
 “ excites their Admiration, to call for the

10 " Author, that he may, in Person, partake
 " of the Applause due to his Talents." You
 add—" Nothing" like this ever happened in
 " *England* :"—And, I may say, never will.
 I know not how far a *French* Audience may
 carry their Complaisance : But, were I in the
 Author's Case, I should be unwilling to trust
 to the Civility of an *English* Pit or Gallery.
 We know it is the Privilege of an *English*
 Audience to indulge in a Riot upon any Pre-
 tence : Benches have been torn up, and even
 Swords drawn, upon slighter Occasions
 than the damning of a Play. Suppose, there-
 fore, upon your Principle, that every Play,
 that is offered, should be received ; and sup-
 pose, which may fairly be supposed, that
 some one of them should happen to be
 damned. Might not an *English* Audience,
 on this Occasion, " call for the Author,"
 not " to partake of their Applause" indeed,
 but to receive the Tokens of their Displea-
 sure. Maugre the good Opinion, which I
 have conceived of my own Talents, I would
 not run the Hazard of having my Play ac-
 ted upon these Terms : For I think it less
 tremendous

tremendous and much safer, to hear at Distance the Groans and Catcalls of ill-disposed Critics, than to stand the Brunt against "half-eaten Apples and sour Oranges" from the two Galleries.

You still dwell upon your Favourites, the *French*; and though you confess it is foreign to your Purpose, cannot help preferring them to your own Countrymen, in that their Conversations turn more on the Plays than the Players; whereas with us "every insignificant Player (I omit your invidious Climax of Names) is as much talked of, as a Minister of State." Perhaps so, in the little drinking and singing Societies, where these Insignificants that frequent them, are held equally significant with the First-rate Actors; but in polite and literary Conversations, (though I never was entitled to join with the former, and have had but small Share in the latter) I dare say, the Poet is as often talked of as the Players; and if the Excellence of *Garrick's Lear* or *Macbeth* has chanced to have been mentioned,

tioned, due Praise has doubtless been given to *Shakespear* in the same Breath.

You now proceed to Pronounce your Anathema at once against the *Orphan of China*, which you call " a Piece, whose
 " Inconsistencies and Contradictions can be
 " equalled by nothing but the ridiculous Fustian, in which it is wrote." Surely nothing but the most inveterate Spleen and Rancour could have dictated so harsh a Censure, without any Reasons, but a bare *ipse dixit*. To enter into a Comparison of this Piece with *Voltaire's*, would at present be needless as well as too tedious : But surely Mr. *Murphy* must at least be allowed to have some Merit as an Improver of the *Frenchman's* Plan, by lopping off all the Love-Parts, (which must have proved disgusting to an *English* Audience) by introducing the *Orphan* himself upon the Stage, grown to Maturity, and by making the Plot more intricate, and the Distress more interesting by creating another new Personage in the Character of *Zamti's* Son of about the same
 Age

Age with the *Orphan*: At least the Applauses of an unbiassed Audience plainly shewed, that its "Inconsistencies and Contradictions" were not so glaring, as to prevent it's Repetition; nor will they, I may venture to say, be any Bar to it's being as well received, if it should be revived this Season; except you, Sir, will be pleased to open our Eyes by pointing them out to us, where at present we cannot discover them. As to the Language, what is commonly meant by Fustian is Bombast; from which our Author is as free, as from what I may call Linsley-woolsey, too often mistaken for Simplicity. I am enabled in some Degree to judge of this Matter, as I have compared Mr. *Murphy's* Play with a Translation of *Voltaire's*, in our Language: And I am surpris'd to hear you Sir, (who avow yourself the Partisan of that and every other *Frenchman*) totally decry our *English* Author, when he has transplanted so many Beauties from the Work in Question, and ingrafted them into his own Stock. But, notwithstanding the contemptible Opinion you affect to conceive of this Gentle-

man

man and his Writings, the World will hardly be brought over to it, whilst they remember his Productions, not only in the Drama, but in other various Branches of Literature; among which I shall take the Liberty to mention the *Gray's-Inn Journals*, in particular, which (to forestall any Censure of yours) it is plain the Author only play'd with, and never intended them to be as exact, and finished as their Coteremporaries, the *World* or the *Connoisseur*. But your Virulence against this Gentleman is not satisfied with vilifying what he has already wrote, but you must also extend it to what you can know nothing of. " You are told, that he proposes bringing another Play upon the Stage this Season," and you advise the Manager " to receive it by all Means, and that for a Reason which may perhaps be thought extraordinary by some, (you might have said, by all) viz. because the Author's Name puts it out of all Doubt, that it must be execrably bad." Now granting it to be true, that this Author has hitherto failed in his Dramatic Attempts, must it necessarily

cessarily follow, that he never will succeed? To silence you at once, the *French* Master, who is at my Elbow, directs me to tell you, that if your Favourite *Racine* had been discouraged at the Ill Success of his first Piece, the *Thebaide*, you would have had one Name less in your Catalogue of Foreign Writers to set in Competition against those of your own Country.

I shall turn over, as not worth my Notice, your Common-Place Remarks on the antient State of the *Theatre* in *England* and *France*, as well as your eloquent Pun or Quibble about *Management* and *Mis-management*. You, indeed, throw in a Kind of Softening in your Commendation of the *Guardian*: But here again the *French* Teacher has pointed out to me a gross Mark of your Ignorance, (notwithstanding your boasted Erudition in the Titles of *French* Plays,) in your calling this little Piece a Translation of *Le Tuteur*, whereas the Name of the *French* Piece is *La Pupille*.

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Drury-

Drury-Lane Play-house, you say, is generally looked upon as unrivalled by *Covent-Garden*; and yet "you have generally observed, that Plays are better acted at the latter House." I shall not attempt to enter into a Comparison between the several Actors of each Theatre; but I am confident, that, Mr. *Garrick* out of the Question, the *Covent-Garden* Company would chuse to decline the Decision of this Point, if you were to be the Judge; especially since you have most contemptuously stigmatized one or two of the principal Gentlemen Performers of that Theatre, and, though your Spite has been generally directed against the other, have not vouchsafed to give a good Word to any one of their Company. But you proceed to say, that Mr. *Garrick* "now leaves all the Capital Parts to wretched Substitutes:" An Assertion, which the Play-Bills of this Season, as well as the last, do manifestly contradict. This, indeed, was advanced only with an Intention, that you might pour out your whole Gall against an admired Actor, whom, in another Place, you represent

represent, as if " Nature had never intended
 " him for any Thing higher than an
 " Hackney - Chairman," and " that his
 " Theatrical Talents would be over-paid by
 " twenty Shillings a Week." I will not
 dirty my Paper by transcribing the foul In-
 vectives with which you so plentifully bespat-
 ter him : Mr. *Mossop* needs no Vindica-
 tor : He is not a Mushroom of the Stage
 just started up, which might probably dis-
 appear as suddenly : His Merit has been long
 tried, and received the public Test of Ap-
 probation : In a Word, his Usefulness on the
 Stage (to say no more of him) in the various
 Casts of Parts in which he has been employ-
 ed, would, at any Time, recommend him;
 and has recommended him, as a very valua-
 ble Requisite in the best-formed Company.
 You, Sir, (as you say of this Actor,) " must
 " be fundamentally defective in every Quali-
 " ty" of a Theatrical Judge, who can find
 out, that " his Elocution is harsh, unhar-
 " monious, and unnatural," and that he " has
 " no Idea of the Character he plays." I have
 not been willing to venture out, for some

Seasons past, though at Night, even into the obscure Shilling-gallery; therefore I cannot pretend to judge of his later Performances: But the Remembrance of his *Zanga*, his *Pierre*, and several other Parts, still dwells so strongly with me, that he must be entirely changed from himself, to be the "wretched" "Substitute" you represent him. As to his genteel Comedy, as I have never seen it, I cannot pretend to judge of it: But I shall never be brought to think, that Mr. *Mossop* would entirely unbecome the Character of *Bevil*, though he might not perhaps have the easy and graceful Deportment of a *Wilks*, or (to come to our own Times) of Mr. *Ross* of the other House. This at least I am sure of, that a "furlly Eye" was never the Characteristic of Mr. *Mossop*'s Look, except when it was required from the Part he played. In a Word, Sir, your Scurrility towards this Actor is the more inexcusable, as he is universally known to be, from his Birth and Education, a Scholar and a Gentleman; and whatever Emoluments he may reap from his present Profession, there can be no Doubt,

from

from his excellent Abilities, but that they must have been equalled at least, if not exceeded, in any other Situation, which Chance or his own Inclinations might have thrown him into.

But it is not sufficient, that you level your Attack against a great and established Character: You must also shoot your Arrows at Random to the Discouragement of unpractised Youth, and the Depression of rising Merit. If *Mr. Holland* has dared to attempt the Part of *Hamlet*, even though for his own Benefit, and if *Mr. Fleetwood* has made his first Appearance on the Stage in a Character most suitable to his Years, Figure, and Tone of Voice, the Manager must be blamed for not clipping their Wings, and chaining them down to the humble Parts of *Rosincraus* and *Guildenstern*, the mild *Benvolio*, or the gentle Country *Paris*.

The Applause given to the Second-rate Actors you suppose to arise, as it were by Reflection, from the great Character of our
Modern

Modern *Roscus*, who introduces these "piti-
ful Players" to the Notice of the Town
as First-Rate Performers. And you further
tell us, that one Expedient to bring them
into Reputation is, to print their Names
in large Letters in the Play-Bills. This
to me seems no less ridiculous, than if you
would go about to persuade People, that
the Manager had the Power of making Men
and Women of the Children employed in
Queen Mab, by mounting them upon Stilts,
and dressing up their Heads with High-
crowned Hats and lofty Plumes of Feathers.
But this Quarrel with the Play-Bills is, in-
deed, a Proof of your wanting more proper
Objects for your Attack, and is, in the
literal Sense, fighting with the Wall.

But you cannot have done with Mr. *Mos-
sop* yet ; and nothing will content you, but
that we must allow the Performance of Mr.
Davies in *Buckingham* to be preferable to that
of Mr. *Mossop* in *Richard*. We will allow,
that Mr. *Davies* fills up his Character with
Propriety ; but Mr. *Davies*, who has good
Sense

Sense as well as a just Knowledge of his Business, I am sure, desires not to be put in Competition with Mr. *Mossop* on any Occasion, no more than Monsieur *Kicksbaws* or Monsieur *Soup-meagre* (supposing them Under-actors) would think they vie with (let me turn back a Page or two) your admired *Dumeniol*, *Clairon*, or *le Kain*, on the *French Stage*.

But I forgot to take Notice of your invidious Treatment of a Gentleman, whose dramatic Writings have already done Honour to the Stage; I mean Mr. *Hume*: And though you are pleased to declare of his *Agis*, that "the *patriotical* (you should " have said *patriotic*) Harangues in that " Play are so very insipid," I may venture to affirm, that the Speeches are as spirited, and as much adapted to the Characters, as any in the declamatory *Cato*, which attracted the Admiration of the last Age; nor need I be afraid to compare the Soliloquy of *Agis* on the Immortality of the Soul, with the famous Soliloquy of *Cato*, or even that of *Hamlet*, on the same Subject. But you
chuse

chuse to pass over in Silence that other celebrated Work of the same Author, the Tragedy of *Douglas*; of which it will be sufficient to say, that the Energetic and affecting Simplicity, which runs through the Whole, may be put in Competition with the most applauded Pieces of the Ancients. Notwithstanding what you or any other embittered Critics may think of this Gentleman's Talents, it is with pleasure I am informed, that a New Tragedy from his Hands will appear on the Stage this Season; the Success of which, there is no doubt, will sufficiently answer any Cavils, which you may be pleased to throw out against it.

And here, Sir, Permit me to observe further, that though (in another Part of your Letter,) you peremptorily declare, that "not a Tolerable Tragedy has appeared these Twenty Years," the contrary may be evinced by looking back on several, that have met with a most favourable Reception, within a much shorter period of Time. I believe, Nobody but yourselves will deny, that

that some Scenes in *Barbarossa* are as interesting and affecting as any in *Rowe* or the other Writers of the last Age: Nor is *Atbelstan*, by the same Author, so entirely devoid of Spirit and Passion, as to deserve a total Neglect. The Tragedy, that appeared at the other House last Winter, though the Work of a plain Man, who pretends to no other Qualification as a Writer than a natural Capacity, unimproved by scholastic Erudition, gave sufficient Proof, that Learning is not requisite to make a *Shakespeare*. I would not by this be understood to mean, that Mr. *Dodley's Cleone* is equal to any Work of that Father of *English* Dramatic Poetry; but only to shew, that a good Understanding, with a moderate Cultivation, may enable a Writer to touch the Passions, and imitate Nature, without reading one *French* Critic, or knowing one Rule of *Aristotle*. The same may be said of the uninformed Spectator, who will feel his Heart moved, and suffer the involuntary Tear to start from his Eye, at an affecting Representation; while the nice and more stub-

born Observer will sit unconcerned, to pay a Complement to his Judgment, though against the Will and Consent of his Passions.

The Instances I have just brought, will be sufficient to prove, that your Assertion is groundless, in alledging "that not a Tolerable Tragedy has appeared these Twenty Years;" and I rather chose to fetch my Proofs from those of the latest Date, though I could have drawn out a much longer Catalogue of very tolerable Pieces produced within the Period you mention. The same might be said in favour of the Comedies which have appeared within the same Time; for though it must be acknowledged, that hardly one has been received with such repeated Applause as the *Suspicious Husband*, yet do they not altogether deserve that Neglect and Oblivion, in which they at present seem to be involved: For the Name of Mr. *More* will be remembered with Pleasure, and Justice perhaps done to his comic Talents by Posterity, if not by the present Age. But supposing it to be true, that scarce one
legi-

legitimate Comedy has appeared worth Notice, the Want has been sufficiently supplied by several lesser Pieces, which it is the Fashion, at present, to stile Comedies, though but of one or two Acts: And here it is but Justice to take Notice, that Mr. Garrick's Merit stands unrivalled in Compositions of this Kind, such as *Miss in her Teens*, the *Lying Valet*, *Lethe*, the *Guardian*, &c. &c. &c. which are, and will long continue to be, the Ornaments of our Stage. As to your Complaint, "that a new Comedy has not been exhibited for some Years past," it is by no means the Fault of the Manager: We have not heard of any one having been offered, much less rejected: And, perhaps, the Reason, why our present Writers have not turned their Talents this Way, is, that it appears to be much easier to express the tragic Passions, than to copy the Manners of common Life. Be this as it will, the Town, I am informed, has great Expectations of seeing a new Comedy this Season, under the Title of the *Jealous Wife*; of

which we can say nothing more, than that (if we are rightly informed) it is not borrowed from any of your so much admired *French Writers*.

Nor can I, Sir, entirely agree with you, in your Opinion, that Translations of *French Plays* would be more pleasing on our Stage than the revival of old Plays, many of which most certainly deserve as much Notice, as those which are frequently represented; and I could wish, that the Manager would do as much Justice to the Works of other old Authors, as he has already done to *Shakespeare* and *Johnson*. Before Mr. *Garrick* took upon him the Management, we knew little more of our favourite Dramatic Author than his *Hamlet*, &c. but such is the Esteem paid him by this his best Commentator, that there is scarce a Play of his, which has not been got up to the best Advantage. To Instance in one only; it is to Mr. *Garrick*, that we are indebted for that exquisite Entertainment in *Romeo and Juliet*,
which

which has been so judiciously altered by him, and rescued from the clumsy Mutillations and ridiculous Additions of the late Mr. *The. Cibber*. I hope the Report is true, that Mr. *Garrick* has some thoughts of appearing in the Play of *King and No King*, by *Beaumont* and *Fletcher*; and I believe he would find his Account in bringing on some other Pieces of those famous Cotemporaries, and in some degree Rivals, of our inimitable *Shakespeare*: At least, if he could spare Time to allow himself the Trouble of removing the Absurdities of some of their Plots, they might give an agreeable Variety to the Stage, and afford his Company an Opportunity of appearing in a new Cast of Parts.

The Success of the *Guardian* might, indeed, tempt either Author or Manager to ransack among the most applauded *French* Writers for other *Little Pieces*, which might be adapted to the *English* Manners: But I very much question, whether the same Success could be insured on the same Account

count, especially if we consider, that the Applause given to the *Guardian* was as much owing to the excellent Performance of all the Characters, and the two principal ones in particular, as to the intrinsic Merit of the Piece itself. It must be allowed, that there is a Similitude in Manners between all Nations, as there is in the Grammar of all Languages; but there are also certain Peculiarities in one, as there are Idioms in the other, which are Characteristic of each. It is, therefore, unlikely, that a close and exact Translation of a *French* Play should be suitable either to our Manners or Diction; though a proper Variation in both may render it not entirely unadapted to our Stage. There are, again, some general Characters, which are in common to different Nations and Climates, such as a Miser, for example; as there are also others which bear some Affinity, though not an exact Resemblance, to each other. The *Petit-Maitres* of the *French* Theatre, (if I may judge from the Translation of *Moliere's* Works,) are as nearly of the same Complexion

plexion with the Foplings of our Stage, as the different Humours of the two Nations will admit of; and the arch *French* Valet, or *English* Footman, are scarcely to be distinguished from each other. Yet I believe, if a literal Translation of any of *Moliere's* Pieces, with no other Variation than is barely necessary, was to be represented here, it would appear, that something was wanting more peculiarly characteristic of the *English* Manners: And of this there needs no other Proof than the *Miser* itself, which for want of some such distinguishing Marks is generally allowed to be a cold and insipid Entertainment. I am, therefore, of Opinion, that as the immediate Province of Comedy “ is to paint the Humours and Foibles of
 “ common Life, and to catch the Manners
 “ as they rise,” it is better for an Author to consult the living Book of Nature, as it lies open to him in his own Country, than to take up with a faint and second-hand Representation of it from Strangers. Besides, if there is any Merit in modelling a *French* Play for the *English* Stage, it is but that
 of

of a Painter, who, instead of striking out something from his own Imagination, should content himself with copying from the Originals of others.

I come now to a most astonishing Part of your Letter, in which you say, "you would recommend it to the Manager to bring on no *New Actors* this Season;" and this extraordinary Piece of Advice you further corroborate by declaring, that you "cannot but think even a bad Play preferable to a bad Player." The only Conclusion to be drawn from this singular Thought of yours is, that you had rather hear Nonsense from the Mouth of a good Actor, than proper Sentiments, expressed in a proper Diction, delivered by an indifferent Performer. This, indeed, may be the Case of many an honest *John Trott* in the twelve-Penny Gallery, who is desirous of having his Shilling's worth for his Shilling, in Rant and Vociferation; but there is no experienced Critic, who can afford to sit underneath, though at double the Price, but
would

would rather hear a particular Speech, (which he has been told is very fine,) from a midling Performer, than a whole Part in *Harlotrumbo* from Mr. Garrick. But to wave the Question, "whether a bad Play or "a bad Player is to be preferred," what Reason can be given why a New Actor, whether good or bad, or likely to be good or bad, is not to be admitted to take his Chance, and stand his Tryal, on the Stage, not for this Season alone, I Presume you mean, but ever after? It is in the Power perhaps of a Garrick only, to start forth at once a complete and finished Actor: So many Things are wanting, besides the natural Requisites, to form such a Personage, that the Indulgence of the Town to raw and unexperienced Performers cannot be carried too far at their first setting out. Had this severe Restriction formerly taken Place, we should at this Day have been without a Stage: Or were it, Sir, to take Place hereafter, we might both live perhaps to with a tolerable Successor to Mrs. Clive, Mrs. Cibber, and even Mr. Garrick him-

self. Till the *New Method* of acting, as I
 may call it, was introduced by the *Drury-*
Lane Manager, it is well known, that
 theatrical Performers rose by slow Degrees
 to the Parts they have since adorned. *Mr.*
Quin (to mention no others) stands recor-
 ded, as appearing in a very inferior Charac-
 ter in *Cibber's* alteration of *Richard the*
Third: And if new Actors were not to
 be brought forth in capital Parts at their
 first Appearance, we should have lost, per-
 haps, the greatest Ornament of the modern
 Stage, who was as much followed and ad-
 mired, though less envied, as he has ever
 been since, at his first launching forth at
 the obscure Theatre in *Goodman's Fields*.
 But to come directly to the Point with re-
 spect to the present State of the Theatres.—
 Will any one blame the Manager of *Drury-*
Lane Play-House for having last Year in-
 troduced to the Public Notice *Mr. Fleet-*
wood and *Mr. Obrien*? or will he be held
 culpable for importing a Plant originally
 raised here, though afterwards further cul-
 tivated in *Ireland*, in the Person of *Mr.*
I
King?

King? Is it wrong in *Mr. Garrick* to look out for a Successor to the incomparable *Mrs. Cibber*, in Characters which she formerly could fill with so much Propriety? And does not *Miss Pope*, as far as we have seen of her, give us hopes of her coming up, when Time has improved her, very nearly to the Excellency of this long and justly admired Actress? On the other Hand, has not *Mr. Rich* greatly obliged the Town by his new *Polly*? Nor is there any Reason to imagine, but that *Mrs. Ward* (who I find is engaged by him) will make the Absence of *Mrs. Bellamy* less regretted, if that Actress (whose greatest Fault is, that she cannot be quite equal to *Mrs. Cibber*) should persevere in her Resolution of not appearing this Season upon *Covent-Garden* Stage. To conclude, — So far from thinking that no new Actors should be suffered to try their Talents this or any other Season, I deem it as great an Hardship to bar them from the Stage, (whether their Inclination has led them; and consequently prevented their Advancement in the World by any other Road)

Road,) as it would be to proscribe and ex-
 clude those Veterans, who have long la-
 boured in the Business, for no other Reason,
 than that Age, Sicknēss, or Fashion had ren-
 dered them less useful or less admired. The
 annual Secession of so many excellent Per-
 formers to the Theatre of *Dublin* has made
 it still more and more necessary to give
 Encouragement for new Ones to start up.
 And as that Theatre has formerly been
 looked upon as a Nursery for young Actors,
 so I hope, for the Honour of our *English*
 State, that we may be able hereafter to re-
 turn the Favour, by giving all due Encou-
 ragement to new Actors, who are not en-
 tirely unworthy of our Countenance.

It would be a most disagreeable Task to
 me, to follow you on through all the Dirt
 you have thrown up against almost every
 Actor and Author of Merit. Nor need I take
 Notice of your Accusation against the Mana-
 ger for his Neglect in the Decorations of
 the Scenery: since it is notorious to every
 one who has Eyes, and will open them, that

the Scenes at *Drury-Lane* are as well adapted to the Representations, and as well executed, as any that *Covent-Garden* can boast of, (though you are pleased to assert the contrary,) Pantomimical Decorations not excepted. I shall conclude with admonishing you to beg Pardon (as you have already of Mr. *Mossop*) of the injured Manager in particular, as also of the other Gentlemen, whom you have so injuriously aspersed.

I am, &c. &c. &c.

□ I N I S

